

Red Rock Ranger District – Coconino National Forest
Non-motorized Trails Additions 2014 – Proposed Actions
Public Comment Summary – October 1, 2014

During 2013, the Red Rock Ranger District participated in public meetings about the development of trails in the vicinity of Sedona and the Village of Oak Creek. Using the feedback from those meetings, from other area information (Rimrock, Camp Verde and Cornville) and resource information and Forest Plan direction, the District developed a proposed action for trail projects to be planned and implemented in 2014 and 2015. The proposed actions were included in a letter dated May 2, 2014 from Red Rock District Ranger Nicole Branton. This letter circulated for public review on the Forest Service website, through outreach in local media and through information posters at trailheads.

One hundred individual letters and e-mails were received from people commenting on the proposals. These comments will be considered as part of the decision making process. Other factors include: available funding, resource information, and Forest Plan direction. The District Ranger is the official responsible for a final decision regarding which, if any, projects will be selected for implementation.

Public scoping comments were evaluated for specific topics and suggestions the public brought forth in relation to the non-motorized trail proposals. Thirteen broad topics relevant to the proposal were identified. The majority of commenters were in favor of managing the overall trail system. Many were also in favor of adding trails and developing more trailheads and parking areas. The summary is presented below.

Topic 1: Planning Process

- Some commenters felt that since not all the suggestions that were identified during an RTCA trails planning process were identified in this proposal the public's opinions were not taken seriously.
- Some commenters noted some unrealistic expectations due to funding restrictions and availability.

Topic 2: User Created Trails:

- The majority of commenters were in favor of adopting user created trails.
- Most felt the proposed amount to be incorporated is desirable.
- Some wanted more trails adopted and a few wanted the ability to create their own trails.
- Some wanted more cross-country opportunities.
- A few commenters expressed that the user-created trails reflect the demand for types of trails that attract bikers.

- Many commenters want the user created trails managed, but foresee a never ending cycle of more trails being created.
- A few commenters stated that adopting user created trails encourages more people to create their own trails.
- Commenters wanted to ensure user created trails are sustainable and protect the natural resources.

Topic 3: Adding New Trails:

- Two commenters proposed two specific additions to the trail system: a trail on Beaverhead Flat Road and a trail connecting to Lime Kiln Trail.

Topic 4: Range of Opportunities and Enjoyment Level:

- A range of opportunities suiting different user types was important to some commenters.
- Commenters wanted a range of bike trails which offered varying degrees of technical difficulty.
- A need was expressed for additional easy to intermediate bike trails as well as a need for more technical bike trails.
- A bike club asked that more entry level, family oriented bike trails be included.
- It was stated that user created trails reflect the demand for trail types and user preference.

Topic 5: User Conflicts:

- Comments varied considerably: a few stated that users seemed to get along with few conflicts.
- Many comments stated that bicycles tend to move too quickly and pose hazards to hikers and equestrian.
- Equestrian users generally indicated negative opinion of bicyclists.
- Some bicyclists had negative comments for equestrians; some stating that equestrian should be kept off of bike trails.
- Some commenters suggested separating equestrian; bicyclists and hikers.

Topic 6: Trailheads:

- A few commenters felt funding should focus on trails and not on trailheads
- Most comments were in favor of trailheads and stated the need for well-developed trailheads and parking.
- Specifically, equestrian users want trailheads designed to accommodate trailers.
- Comments were evenly divided as to preference for Option 1 or Option 2 at the Mystic Trailhead. One comment stated that Option 1 could be used temporarily until Option 2 was in place.

Topic 7: Trail-specific Comments:

- Many comments focused on the need to adopt specific trails outlined in the proposed project. Commenters often ranked their personal priorities of various trails and trailheads. The biking community generally offered their priority rankings for each trail and/or trailhead. They were

generally in favor of adopting all trails. Most were in favor of trailhead development, but some felt all funds should be focused on the trails themselves.

- Some trails were rated as to their sustainability and some were identified as needing reroutes.
- Equestrian users wanted trails designed for horses and generally focused their comments on developing trailheads designed for equestrian.
- One commenter wanted trail access for horse and buggy to those trails closed to motorized use.
- few commenters want horses kept off of certain trails.
- Some commenters want bicycles kept off of certain trails.
- Commenters generally appreciated the list of trails being proposed and the development of a well-managed trail system.
- Some commenters wanted more trails developed farther away from the general community areas instead of focusing on trails closer to communities.
- Most commenters were strongly in favor of the proposals for trails near the community areas, such as: Sunset Group, Cornville, Camp Verde and Lake Montezuma area.

Topic 8: Trail Design:

- A comment suggested literature concerning how to design equestrian trails and trailheads.
- Design trails for horses.
- Design trails that are sustainable and satisfy a variety of skill levels.
- Solicit the expertise of bike clubs when designing trails.

Topic 9: Loops and Connectors:

- Comments were universally in favor of loops and connector trails. There were some specific connectors which were rated low priority and some that needed consolidation or reroutes.

Topic 10: Trail General Comments:

- Most commenters applauded the effort of the Red Rock Ranger District to create a well - managed trail system.
- A comment stated the District is over-marking trails and should stop using paint to mark trails.
- Some offered support of more trails near the Rimrock, Sedona and Camp Verde areas.
- Some stated protecting the natural resources and cultural values as highest priority.
- Some wanted long distance trails.
- Many wanted a comprehensive trail system.
- Some commenters question the District's statistics of biker/hiker/equestrian trail user ratios.
- Some requested the creation of separate trails for separate user types.
- Incorporate trails with a variety of terrain types.
- Some comments stated wanting more hiking trails.

Topic 11: Volunteering and Partnerships:

- Numerous individuals, communities, organizations or clubs offered to volunteer or suggested using volunteers.
- Several commenters suggested grant opportunities and partnership opportunities.

Topic 12: Local Economy:

- Several comments stated that a comprehensive trail system would benefit the local economies.

Topic 13: Public Safety:

- Safety was mentioned as a concern on several trails: Such as Hiline and Arizona Cypress.
- Commenters were concerned with the high speed of bicycles and safety for horses and hikers.
- Some suggested that single-use trails would be safer

In addition to the above listed issues, there were a large number of very general comments that provided general support for the proposal or were neutral. There were various other comments received that were outside the scope of this proposal, including:

- A request for photos of the project area
- A request for information on gates on Beaverhead Flat Road – this is related to motorized travel, not this proposal
- A statement that trail maps produced by VVCC were better than those produced by the District.
- A comment that a mountain bike cross-country travel prohibition discriminated against bikers.
- A desire for more motorized single track or more motorized trails in general.
- A desire for recognition for those people that have built social trails

These comments will not be evaluated further for the following reasons:

- This proposal was specifically for non-motorized trails in specific areas. No part of this proposal was for motorized trails.
- This proposal will not be altering any part of the previous travel management decision.
- This proposal does not re-evaluate any special orders that were implemented for resource protection.
- The comment advocates support for something unlawful.